



*Tour:*

## Maya Explorer

History, Arts & Culture

*Destination:*

Merida, Chichen Itza, Playa del Carmen & Tulum

The Yucatan, Mexico

*Itinerary:*

9-days / 8-nights

MAYA EXPLORER - MEXICO					
Day		Morning	Afternoon	Evening	
1	Sat	Travel to Merida, Mexico; transfer to hotel and check-in		Welcome, Safety & Orientation Briefing Welcome Dinner	
2	Sun	Cuzamá Underground Rivers & Jungle Excursion		Salsa Dance Class Dinner & Paseo de Montejo	
3	Mon	Celestún Pink Flamingos	Merida Excursion & City Tour Dinner & the Jarana Dance		
4	Tues	Oxkutzcab Citrus Plantation	Loltun Caves Guided Tour Dinner & Free Time		
5	Wed	Hammock Making in Tixkokob	Transfer to Chichen Itza; Hotel Check-In	Cenote Ik Kil Swim Dinner & Conservation Debate	
6	Thur	Chichen Itza Mayan Ruins - New Seven Wonders of the World	Transfer to Punta Laguna	Punta Laguna Reserve & Spider Monkey Guided Tour Transfer to Playa del Carmen; Hotel Check-in and Local Dinner	
7	Fri	Tulum Mayan Ruins	Ziplining, Rappelling & Cenote Snorkeling Local Dinner		
8	Sat	Xcaret Park Mexico			Xcaret Mayan Dinner Show
9	Sun	Depart Mexico			



As with all sample itineraries, please be advised that this is an 'example' of a schedule and that the activities and hotels shown may be variable dependent upon dates, weather, special requests and other factors. Itineraries will be confirmed prior to travel.



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## Day 1

*Dinner on arrival*

Arrive into Merida, Mexico in the afternoon, clear Customs & Immigrations, meet your Tour Director and transfer to your local hotel. After check-in, we'll have our Welcome, Safety & Orientation Meeting. We'll have dinner locally this evening and maybe even a chance to wonder and stroll the streets.

# Hola Mexico!



## Did you know?

- ✓ **The Yucatan Peninsula includes 3 Mexican States and lots of places to enjoy:**
  - Quintana Roo** (eastern coast state facing the Caribbean Sea) offers great beach vacation time and is famous for its Maya Riviera. Capital City: Chetumal
  - Yucatan** (center, northern shore state) where you can explore Mayan archaeological sites and one of the Seven New Wonders of the World: Chichen Itza. Capital City: Merida
  - Campeche** (western coast state, facing the Gulf of Mexico) has many important ancient Mayan sites such as Calakmul and the Island of Jaina. Capital City: Campeche
- ✓ **The Yucatan Peninsula is a land of Cenotes, Caves, and Fresh Underground Rivers.**

There are no rivers running above ground in the Yucatan Peninsula. Instead, there is a large web of fresh underground rivers, forming magnificent caves and cenotes. The Maya people have used cenote water as their main source of drinking water and irrigation, since ancient times. Nowadays, many cenotes are popular tourist sites, where you can enjoy swimming or cave diving.



- ✓ **The Yucatan Peninsula is a land of natural beauty.**  
The Yucatan Peninsula has a wide variety of ecological niches and natural wonders, each state has something special to offer visitors:



**Quintana Roo:** crystal clear azure Caribbean Sea beaches and the majority of the second largest barrier reef in the world.

**Yucatan:** cenotes systems and bio-reserves dedicated to conserving the natural habitat of flamingos and more.

**Campeche:** the ancient Mayan city of Calakmul is now protected within the largest tropical rainforest reserve in Mexico, home to jaguars, howler monkeys, and many other endemic flora and fauna.

- ✓ **The Yucatan has some impressive Maya Archaeological sites.**

The state of Yucatan offers you many impressive Maya archaeological sites such as Uxmal and Chichen Itza which has various clusters of Mayan pyramids and temples scattered over 500 hectares of land. The Maya pyramids and temples within the "visited zone" include the fabulous temple of Kukulcan and the Maya Observatory among the most prominent and important Maya achievements in their architecture.



- ✓ **The Mayan Heritage of the Yucatan Peninsula is pretty amazing.**

In the Yucatan State, native people are Maya or Mestizos (Spanish and Maya heritage). As you drive around the Yucatan Peninsula, you will find many small Mayan communities, villages, and Colonial cities where local people continue to practice their ancient Maya and Colonial traditions. Take the time to interact with local Maya people who are friendly and peaceful. You are welcome to participate in many traditional festivities that local communities celebrate throughout the year.

- ✓ **The Yucatan Peninsula has a great climate.**

Basically, the Yucatan Peninsula's weather offers you a mildly hot climate during the months of **November to March** (the Rainy Season) with moderate to heavy afternoon rain and an average temperature of 74°F (23.5°C). **December to February** you will need a light winter sweater on most evenings. Generally, the Dry Season starts at the end of **March and ends mid-May**. These are the hottest days with drought and average temperature is 82°F (28°C). **June through October** is very humid and wet, with heavy short spurts of rain almost every afternoon. During these months, coastal areas may be subject to hurricanes.



## Day 2

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Cuzamá Cenotes & Jungle Excursion / Salsa Class / Paseo de Montejo

Today we'll visit two marvelous Cenotes located in the small village of Cuzamá. The cenotes are sinkholes where underground rivers break through the limestone crust of the earth. For Mayas, they represent the doorway to the spiritual underworld. After about a 45-minute transfer time, we'll travel into the **Mayan jungles** to visit and swim into the beautiful and clear cenotes. We'll return in the late afternoon and then it's time to get your Salsa on! Grab your dancing shoes as we learn the ins and outs of dancing Salsa-style with an instructor. Ole!



This evening, after a nice dinner, we're free to wander and explore the beautiful **Paseo de Montejo Avenue**. Paseo de Montejo is a notable avenue of Mérida named after Francisco de Montejo, the Spanish conquistador who founded the city in 1542, and is the location of some of the most iconic buildings and monuments of the city. Many beautiful mansions were built along the avenue by wealthy Yucatecans of the 19th century.

## Day 3

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Celestún / Downtown Merida Walking Tour / Jarana Dance at La Vaqueria

**Celestún** is the home of the biggest settlement of **Pink Flamingos** in the continent. To visit them, we'll take a boat tour led by a knowledgeable **ornithologist** who will also educate us about the importance of mangroves in the region.



In the afternoon we'll get to enjoy a **walking tour of El Centro of Merida** to visit the Cathedral, the Casa de Montejo and the beautiful Plaza Grande. In the evening, we'll have dinner and then watch the traditional dance of the Yucatan - **the Jarana** - at the spectacular **La Vaqueria**.



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## Day 4

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Oxkutzcab Citric Plantation / Loltun Caves

Today, we'll depart early in the morning traveling south to the village of **Oxkutzcab**, the biggest citrus producer in the state of Yucatan. There we will take a tour of the plantation and learn about the harvesting methods and the characteristics of the fruits produced in the local villages.

Later, we'll head over to the village of Mani for lunch. After lunch we'll visit the incredible **caves of Loltun with a guide**, one of the biggest cave systems in the Yucatan. In the caves, we'll see a **vampire bat nest** among the **astonishing stalactite and stalagmite structures**. Our expert guide will explain how Mayan people used the cave as a refuge from the Spaniards during the war.

After dinner this evening, we'll have free time to catch up on rest or go exploring! The night is ours!



## Day 5

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Tixkokob / Chichen Itza / Ik Kil

Today we'll check out of our hotel and head to the town of **Tixkokob**. We'll learn about the art of **making hammocks** and experience Mayan living first-hand.



**Tixkokob** - a picturesque town located in the heart of Yucatán in Mexico, is a hidden treasure that stands out as a land of artisans and the epicenter of hammock making. With a rich cultural history and ancient tradition, this charming corner is known as the home of more than 1,000 families dedicated to the creation of these authentic hand-woven masterpieces. In your visit, you'll go on a journey revealing Tixkokob's artisanal legacy and its contribution to the preservation of hammock culture. Learn all about the art of hammock weaving from the women of the community, who will teach you all the traditional techniques.

After lunch, we head off to the Chichen Itza area, check in to our new hotel and then it's off to enjoy the local cenote, Ik Kil, for some swimming and relaxation.

**Cenote Ik Kil** is one of the most beautiful of the natural wells that stud the jungle of the Yucatan Peninsula. Cool off with a dip in these vibrant turquoise waters. Get a sense of why the Mayans considered the cenotes to be sacred places.



After dinner this evening, we'll break into teams for our Conservation debate!

**Conservation Debate** – What happens when Mayan history starts to be destroyed when commercial developers take over? Your group ponders this when half of your students become Developers lobbying for change, while the other half act as Conservationists hoping to preserve the land and the history. A group acting as the Board of Directors gets to make the ultimate decision after both sides present their ideas and strategies for the future.

## Day 6

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Chichen Itza / Punta Laguna / Playa del Carmen

This morning we'll check-out of our hotel and get ready to travel eastward!

As one of the **New Seven Wonders of the World**, **Chichen Itza** combines majesty and nature. A guide will explain about the splendid Castle, an imposing example of the immense depth of the Mayas' knowledge of the cosmos. We'll visit the biggest **Ball Game Court** of the Mayan world and also have some time for souvenir shopping.



After lunch, we head off to **Punta Laguna Reserve** where a naturalist guide will lead us into the jungle to watch and learn about the **spider monkey** and the diverse flora and fauna of the reserve. Punta Laguna is the gateway to the Otoch Ma'ax Yetel Kooch National Protected Area, home to spider monkeys, howler monkeys, and many other types of animals and plants. The Punta Laguna Nature Reserve is operated by and directly benefits local Maya people. In 2002, the community of Punta Laguna founded the Najil Tucha cooperative, which is collectively run by the approximately 30 families in town. Revenue from tourism is divided between the families.



After our great afternoon, we'll travel on to Playa del Carmen, check into our hotel, and enjoy a great dinner!

## Day 7

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Tulum Mayan Ruins / Ziplining, Rappelling, Cenotes

Get ready for a day of Mexico fun! Today we'll spend at the Tulum Mayan Ruins and then have the afternoon for adventure sports!

**Tulum Mayan Ruins with a Private Guide** - One of the last cities inhabited by the Maya people, Tulum was once an important trading hub, generating enormous wealth exporting jade, turquoise and obsidian. Now, it's a fascinating city-museum, with well-preserved temples & stunning coastal views. Built late in the thirteenth century during what is known as the Mayan post-classic period, it was a seaport, being the only Mayan city built



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on a coast, and was one of the few protected by a wall. Most prominent among the remaining structures is the Castillo, or castle, perched on the edge of a 12-meter limestone cliff overlooking the Caribbean coast.



**Maya Jungle Tour** - Enter into the amazing Sac-Actun system, snorkel surrounded by awesome rock formations, rappel down into a cenote (underground cave) and swim in a unique natural pool. Enjoy nature flying over the jungle's foliage on exciting ziplines and have a load of fun flying through the treetops!



After a fabulous day of fun in the sun, we'll have dinner and downtime.

### **Day 8**

*Breakfast, lunch & dinner*

Xcaret

Today we'll have all day to enjoy a favorite on our last day, Xcaret!

**Xcaret Ecological Park** - With 50 natural and cultural attractions, Xcaret is a sprawling water and theme park. Float lazily along three underground rivers, visit the stingray sanctuary or hop on a speedboat. Included with admission:

Three Underground Rivers  
Coral Reef Aquarium  
Bee farm  
Mushroom Farms  
Mayan Village & Mayan Ruins  
Museum of Popular Mexican Art  
Chapels of Guadalupe and San Francisco de Asís  
Papantla Flyers

Multiple beaches, coves and natural pools  
Sea turtles, crocodiles, and manatees  
Aviary & Butterfly Garden  
Bromelia and Orchid Greenhouses  
Gum-making camp  
Jungle trails & Paradise River  
Equine Show  
Guided park tours

At extra cost: Several things such as boat rides, Swim-with-Dolphins, stingray encounters and Sea Trek are at additional cost if you elect to participate. For a full list of what is included and current costs for extra activities please visit [xcaret.com](http://xcaret.com).



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This evening, we're in for a real Mayan treat - the Xcaret evening show! The show focuses on Mexico's history and folklore and is represented by more than 300 artists on the stage of the Gran Tlachco. Simply follow the copal aroma (Mexican incense) to the Mayan Village, where the Pre-Hispanic Dances take place at nightfall. Admire the Horse Exhibition, where charros and Adelitas show off their skills on magnificent Aztec horses and get excited with a fantastic dinner.



The show is a journey through the history of Mexico that goes from pre-Hispanic times to the Mexico we see today. It's divided into two parts; the first represents what life was like and the legends of some of the cultures that lived in pre-Hispanic Mexico. Two of the most popular presentations in the first half are the Mayan Ball Game and the Encounter of the Worlds, which symbolize the miscegenation and beginning of modern Mexico through an emotional melody. The second part of the show includes typical dances and all the joy of the different cultural regions of Mexico. The most popular presentations in the second half are The Elderly Men of Michoacán and "Mexico in La Piel" performed by the singers of Xcaret.



### Day 9

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Adios MEXICO!

Today we'll start to say goodbye to this wonderful land! We will wave to our new friends as we leave for the airport in Cancun and hopefully, take away memories that will last a lifetime!

*Adios Mexico!*



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# Maya Explorer

## HISTORY, ARTS & CULTURE

**Minimum Booking Numbers:**

20 students

**What's Included:**

Roundtrip international flights (into Merida, out of Cancun)  
8-nights' accommodation: 4-nights Merida, 1-night Chichen Itza, 3-nights Playa del Carmen  
Airport transfers and transportation to activities  
Breakfasts, lunches & dinners starting with dinner on arrival and ending with breakfast on departure, dependent upon flight / transfer times  
Cuzama Underground Rivers & Jungle excursion  
Celestún Pink Flamingos excursion  
Salsa Dancing lesson  
La Vaqueria excursion  
Walking City Tour of Merida  
Oxkutzcab Plantation Tour  
Loltun Caves excursion  
Chichen Itza excursion with Private Guide  
Tixkokob Hammock demonstration  
Cenote Ik Kil Swimming  
Punta Laguna Reserve & Spider Monkey class  
Tulum Mayan Ruins with a Private Guide  
Ziplining / Rappelling / Cenote Snorkel in Tulum  
Xcaret Park with Evening Show  
Personal Tour Director  
24-hour emergency cover

**What's Not Included:**

Fully comprehensive insurance (mandatory)  
Transfers to/from home airport  
Luggage fees if not included with airline ticketing  
Meals and snacks not shown  
Cost of visas, full or collective passports  
Cost of inoculations or medication required for travel  
Sightseeing / Entertainment Options not shown in Itinerary  
Hotel incidental deposits & bills – meals, mini-bar items, recreation charges, purchases billed to room, etc.  
Any gratuities – coach drivers, hotel services, Tour Director, local guides

As always, our staff are always available to you to answer any questions you may have regarding programming. If we may serve you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

